‘Cicero cannot be separated from the state’: in search of Cicero’s political and moral exemplarity in Asconius Pedianus and the Scholia Bobiensia

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1 Introduction

Ancient commentaries and scholia, and especially the Latin ones, have for a long time been approached predominantly from a philological angle.[1] Recently, however, research has begun to consider questions of authority and legitimation, cultural canonization and negotiation of the past as important fields of study for this genre. My chapter reflects this interest by looking at a specific aspect of the two oldest corpora of Ciceronian commentaries of which we have substantial traces: the commentaries by Asconius Pedianus and the *Scholia Bobiensia*. I question whether we can see elements of a canonization of Cicero that go beyond admiration for his rhetorical skills: do the commentators also portray him as representing his own time in a specific way and in the sense that he can be considered an example of political and/or moral behaviour? By asking such a question, I interpret the commentaries and scholia as part of the process of Cicero's canonization in Imperial times.[2]

This approach from the perspective of reception studies has several advantages with regard to the Ciceronian scholia. So far, one reason why they have been largely neglected in modern scholarship is their supposedly inferior quality: some of their historical details are considered useful, because they are not transmitted elsewhere, but in general the scholia are regarded as less interesting for the interpretation of the texts than some of the scholia and ancient commentaries on poets like Vergil, Terence, or Lucan.[3] Yet, the perceived qual-

1 Good evidence for this is Glock's purely philological entry about the Latin scholia in Dyck and Glock 2001.—Translations in this chapter are my own, unless otherwise indicated. The title of this chapter is a translation of *Schol. Bob. In Cur. et Clod.* 86.19 St.: *Cicero seiungi ab re publica non potest* (see below p. 210).

2 See Farrell in this volume on the relation between Asconius' commentary and Cicero's canonization.

3 Even Zetzel 2018, 143, whose concise treatment is a plea for more thorough studies, calls them

ity of the scholia's content becomes a less important criterion if one turns to reception studies. Even when they are stating the obvious about Cicero, albeit often in greater detail than we find in other exemplary discourse in Antiquity, the scholia and commentaries testify to the pervasiveness of Cicero as a historical, rhetorical, and moral exemplary figure. Additionally, because the scholia cannot be ascribed to a specific author or to one specific period of time, they represent not one individual author's view of Cicero, but more collective testimonies of the *process* of Cicero's ancient and late antique *Nachleben*. Layers from different centuries overlap in most of them and suggest the longevity of the negotiation of Cicero's legacy.[4]

This potential of the scholia for studying Cicero's reception has recently been made fruitful by Caroline Bishop, Thomas Keeline, and most importantly Giuseppe La Bua. By including them in their studies of the history of Roman rhetorical teaching and declamation, Keeline and La Bua show the stability with which students and scholars approached Cicero's speeches throughout Antiquity, whereas Bishop argues that they can help us understand the process of transforming Cicero into a classical author comparable to his Greek models, especially Demosthenes.[5] La Bua's book in particular is an important step for re-establishing the intellectual discourse that informs the comments and *argumenta* of the scholia. He has shown in great detail that the scholia are interested not only in Cicero's rhetorical mastery, but that they also pay attention to the field of Roman exemplarity, rhetorical sincerity and, last but not least, Cicero's public *persona*.[6]

In my chapter I will follow a similar path by examining aspects of Cicero's political and moral exemplarity in Asconius Pedianus and the *Scholia Bobiensia*.[7] My approach is much indebted to La Bua's hypothesis that the scholiasts invited their readers to consider Cicero as an example to be imitated in their

"less gaudy" than the Vergilian material. It is striking, for example, that in the two volumes edited by Geerlings and Schulze 2002–2004 there is no chapter dedicated to the Ciceronian material.

4 Zetzel 2018, 147 stresses the fluidity of the material: "… notes and commentaries of different types [of scholia-traditions, CP] flowed from one set of notes to another, from one margin to another".

5 Cf. Keeline 2018, 13–72; La Bua 2019; Bishop 2015 (and see also Bishop 2019, 173–217 on Demosthenes as Cicero's rhetorical role model); cf. also Bishop in this volume.

6 Cf. La Bua 2019.

7 The question could also be applied to the later corpora. A good example is the vexed question of the *oratio figurata* in the *Scholia Gronoviana*, for which see Margiotta in this volume; it is interesting that the scholiast argues more from a Caesarian angle and from political circumstances than from an (imagined) Ciceronian psychology.

own lives, to become new Ciceros themselves.[8] According to him, the history of ancient scholarship on Cicero's speeches from Asconius onwards shows that "Cicero stirred up enthusiasm and condemnation at the same time, as both a prose stylist and a political authority".[9] However, the aim of the scholia is broader than that:[10] it was not only young Romans who could learn how to become Cicero-like, morally competent public speakers, but also non-Roman users could learn how to become Romans by being introduced to the last generation of the Republic as one epoch of Rome's history that was among the most formative ones for a Roman cultural identity.

2 Cicero's Ancient Exemplarity and the Commentaries

Even though Cicero's shameful death during the proscriptions of 43 BCE was meant to suggest to his contemporaries that he was an enemy of the (new powerful men in) the state, soon afterwards his presence in the schools of declamation as well as in historiography turned him into an exemplary man of Rome's recent past.[11] This meant more than simply acknowledging Cicero's rhetorical excellence: he was also presented as an important political actor—in the words of Plutarch 'an eloquent man **and a lover of his country**' (λόγιος ἀνὴρ **καὶ φιλόπατρις**, Plu. *Cic*. 49.5).[12] We find evidence for this from the late Augustan period onwards. In Manilius' *Astronomica* (probably written in the last years of Augustus' reign),[13] Cicero figures in a long series of *viri illustres* of Roman history who have deserved a dwelling place in the Milky Way as *fortes animae dignataque nomina* (1.758; Cicero is mentioned in 1.794–795);[14] in a fragment from Cornelius Severus' *Res Romanae* quoted by Seneca the Elder, Cicero's death is described in terms that evoke his consular ethos.[15] In Tiberian histo-

8 Cf. La Bua 2019, 337, and La Bua in this volume.

9 La Bua 2019, 181.

10 I owe this point to James Zetzel's insightful comments during the workshop.

11 Cf. e.g. Kaster 1998; Degl'Innocenti Pierini 2003; Sillett 2015; Keeline 2018; La Bua 2019; Pieper 2021; Jansen 2022; cf. also the edited volumes by Altman 2015; Manuwald 2016; Pieper and van der Velden 2020; Berno and La Bua 2022.

12 On the famous episode towards the end of the *Life of Cicero*, in which Augustus declares that he has come to terms with Cicero's legacy, cf. Lintott 2013, 210; Keeline 2018, 108–109; Pieper 2021, 344.

13 Cf. Volk 2009, 137–161.

14 Cf. Baldini Moscadi 1981, 53–55; Volk 2009, 233.

15 Cornelius Severus, fr. 219.1–7 Hollis (= Sen. *Suas*. 6.26.1–7): *oraque magnanimum spirantia paene virorum | in rostris iacuere suis. sed enim abstulit omnis, | tamquam sola foret,* ***rapti Ciceronis imago. | tunc redeunt animis ingentia consulis acta*** *| iurataeque manus*

riography, Cicero's image is further consolidated. He is regularly portrayed as a defender of the state, a prudent consul, and a father of the fatherland; in short, he could easily be turned into a predecessor of the princeps Augustus and his claim of the *res publica restituta* because he symbolized the harmonization of Republican past and (proto-)'Imperial' present, i.e. the *concordia* that was especially dear to Tiberius.[16] This image, shaped in the early Empire, turned out to be quite stable. When Plutarch conceived his *Lives* of famous Greek and Roman personalities, Cicero's and Demosthenes' *bioi* were among the earliest he wrote. While Joseph Geiger has suggested that for the Latin part Plutarch seems to have been inspired by the gallery of *viri illustres* on Augustus' Forum, there probably was no such statue of Cicero there.[17] This is an indication of the power of the historiographical negotiation about Cicero in the first century CE: obviously it had created such a powerful image of Cicero that, by Plutarch's time, he firmly belonged to the group of the most representative Roman politicians of the past, so that that it was only natural for Plutarch to write his biography.

I suggest that the negotiation of the historico-political symbol of Cicero triggered the ancient commentators' historical interest in his speeches, as well.[18] As I will argue, Asconius, the earliest author of commentaries on Cicero's works

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deprensaque foedera noxae | patriciumque nefas; extincti poena Cethegi | deiectusque redit votis Catilina nefandis ('The heads of great-hearted men, still almost breathing, lay on the rostra that were theirs: **but all were swept away by the sight of the ravaged Cicero**, as though he lay alone. **Then they recalled the great deeds of his consulship**, the conspiracy, the wicked plot he uncovered, the aristocrat's crime he smothered; they recalled Cethegus' punishment, Catiline cast down from his impious hopes', transl. Winterbottom). A few verses later Cicero is hailed as the *egregium semper patriae caput* ('the glorious head of his country') and the *vindex senatus* ('defender of the senate'). Cf. for the fragment Dahlmann 1975 and Sillett 2015, 167–169.

16 On Cicero and historical harmonization in Bruttedius Niger see Pieper 2021; for Velleius Paterculus, cf. Wiegand 2013, 130–131. On the programmatic function of the Aedes Concordiae Augustae, which Tiberius dedicated a few years before he succeeded Augustus in 10 CE, see Kellum 1990.

17 Cf. Geiger 2005, 240 for the influence of the Forum Augustum on the Plutarchan *bioi*; and Geiger 2008, 98 and 156 for the possible exclusion of Cicero from the gallery on the Augustan Forum.

18 Farrell in this volume reads the tradition of Asconius' commentaries on Cicero's speeches as following the canonization of Cicero in the first century after his death. That there were also examples of more rhetorically oriented commentaries already in the earlier Empire, is very probable given Quintilian's emphasis on Cicero's rhetorical excellence; but we only see concrete examples of these in the pseudo-Asconian scholia that stem from Late Antiquity. Generally, we should probably avoid thinking in clear-cut typologies: Jakobi 2004, 5 has questioned Friedrich Leo's typological differentiation between realia commentary and rhetorical commentary, at least for the first centuries of the Empire. Cf. also Zetzel 2018 (as in n. 5).

we know of, introduces Cicero's political career and his personality through the speeches.[19] The anonymous Bobbio scholiast adopts a similar approach (in fact, as can be shown, at least for the *Pro Milone*, the *Scholia Bobiensia* actually use Asconius' commentary as one of their sources).[20] To a certain extent these two commentaries reveal a reverse approach compared to the exemplary discourse on Cicero in other genres: in the latter, Cicero's complex and rich life is reduced to a few moments and thereby turned into a symbol of just a handful of political concepts, whereas in the 'historical' commentaries this exemplary nucleus serves as the starting point for a more detailed history of Cicero, one of the major agents of late Republican political life. In this way the commentaries and scholia can be defined both as a kind of a history book (in which Cicero serves as the main source and most reliable witness)[21] and a detailed biography of Cicero's public *persona*—in other words, Cicero is presented as a key to understanding late Republican politics.[22] This goes further than the functions of modern commentaries, which are meant to elucidate the text they comment upon. While the Ciceronian scholia serve that purpose as well, they additionally use the Ciceronian corpus as a starting point for their much broader historical interests.[23]

19 On Asconius, see recently Bishop 2015, Steel 2022, 237–239, and Keeline in this volume. Bishop 2015, 287–292 compares Asconius' working method to Didymus' historical commentary on Demosthenes. As Keeline in this volume argues (p. 59), Asconius was fascinated by unsolved riddles, especially regarding realia and prosopography. This research-minded attitude could be labelled historical or antiquarian.

20 Cf. *Schol. Bob. Mil.* 116.4–13 St., which according to Stangl 1912 ad loc. is taken from Asc. *Mil.* 43C. Also the *argumentum* of the scholia seems informed by Asconius in many ways. James Zetzel in the discussion portion of the workshop defined the scholiast as a research-minded archaist (whose sources might have been authors like Gellius or Julius Romanus).

21 Cf. e.g. Asc. *Pis.* 1.1–5C, where the (contested) date of the speech is proven to be shortly before the opening of Pompey's theatre with the help of Cicero's words: *hoc intellegi ex ipsius Ciceronis verbis potest* ('this can be understood from the words of Cicero himself'). Asconius' emphasis on historical rather than rhetorical aspects of the speeches, which manifests itself in the huge number of prosopographical lemmata, for example, confirms the impression that the works of the orator Cicero could be read as sort of history book and that the implied reader would be rather interested in the major and minor actors of Roman politics roughly between the Sullan and the Octavian civil wars. For a different explanation of Asconius' prosopographical interest, cf. Keeline in this volume.

22 Cf. Zetzel 2018, 148 (on Asconius' aim to teach "the history of the Roman republic"). Whether the Ciceronian scholia have also influenced biographies of Cicero, or whether Tiro's or Nepos' biographies are important sources for the commentators, is beyond the scope of this article. But the question is relevant of course: in the case of the Demosthenian scholia, Gibson 2002, 46 assumes that "authors of biographies of Demosthenes seem not to have imported much content from [the] commentaries (and vice versa)".

23 In this respect they are comparable to the historico-cultural function of early modern

Asconius and the *Scholia Bobiensia* can thereby fill a gap: with the exception of Sallust's monograph on the Catilinarian conspiracy, in which the ambiguous evaluation of Cicero's role has led to much debate among scholars,[24] we have no treatment of Cicero's political deeds in the form of a biography or a longer historiographical narrative in Latin—whereas in Greek, there are Plutarch's biography and Cassius Dio's lengthy treatment of Cicero's exile and fight against Mark Antony. Sabine MacCormack, for example, seems to base her judgement that Cicero was judged "with some severity" in later Imperial historiography mostly on these Greek sources.[25] On the one hand, the lack of Latin counterparts is due to transmission: the long biography that Cicero's freedman Tiro wrote shortly after his death, or Livy's books that dealt with the first century BCE are lost to us—as are other important works like Asinius Pollio's *Historiae*. On the other hand, the lack of longer Latin historiographical texts dealing with Cicero also fits a trend of later Imperial times: instead of large-scale historiography, from the second century CE onwards historiographers were more interested in genres that abbreviate, condense and systemize the knowledge amassed by Livy, Sallust, and others. It is sufficient to think of Florus' history of Rome, of collections like Ampelius' *Liber memorialis* or the writings transmitted under the name of Aurelius Victor. In all of these, Cicero appears, too, but in the abbreviated and thus, in an exemplary form which Keeline has related to the schools of declamation: his consulship, exile, and death are the most repeated events (as they probably were in earlier large-scale historiography). In the abbreviated form, however, they are hardly ever narrated, but only referred to as something the reader is supposed to know already. Similarly, the commentaries on the speeches do not *narrate* Cicero's life (only in the *argumenta* do we find narrative elements, most strikingly in Asconius' extended one to the *Pro Milone*). They do, however, considerably increase the amount of detail and the record of distinct moments of Cicero's life available to their readers.

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commentaries, which was not only to "play an auxiliary role … Commentaries were mainly studied … in order to acquire knowledge and skills" (Enenkel and Nellen 2013, 3).

24 See now Sillett 2015, 42–101 and Jansen 2022, 40–81, with ample further bibliography.

25 MacCormack 2013, quotation on 253. One must relativize her statement, however, as she mainly bases it on Greek sources (especially Dio Cassius and Appian) which do not seem to be fully representative for the Latin tradition (otherwise it would be hard to understand why Cicero appears as a positive *exemplum* both in Ampelius and Ps.-Aurelius Victor's *De viris illustribus*; see below). On Cicero in Cassius Dio cf. Gowing 1992, 143–161 (esp. on the last years of Cicero) and now Jansen 2022, ch. 3 and 4 *passim*.

3 Implied Author/Implied Reader: Aims and Structural Organization of Asconius and *Scholia Bobiensia*

Especially in the case of the *Scholia Bobiensia* a further preliminary remark on my underlying assumptions is needed. These scholia are not the work of one clearly identifiable author,[26] as they are transmitted anonymously and in what must be an abridged and adapted fourth-century version of an earlier corpus. I will nevertheless treat them, just like Asconius' (fragmentary) commentary, as a *coherent corpus*—in the sense that they represent a specimen of a Ciceronian commentary as it was conceived towards the end of the second century and still partly available in the fourth century. A consequence is that in my view the anonymous *Scholia Bobiensia*, just like Asconius' commentary, have an implied author (who in reality might be several authors in different periods who share certain interests).[27] As others in this volume argue as well, such an implied author of an ancient commentary is normally interested in showing his authority in rhetorical and historical matters.[28] An authoritative voice of an implied author, however, can only exercise its authority if an ideal reader is willing to accept it, a process that La Bua defines as an "interactive dialogue between the composer of the commentary and his readership".[29] As suggested by Keeline, it is not important whether such a reader actually existed or was just the invented mirror of the author's predilections.[30] For the bulk of my argument, I will talk about these ideal readers: by way of analogy, I will call them the 'implied reader' of the two sets of commentaries.[31] They are interested in knowing more about Cicero's rhetorical skills,[32] the historical circumstances of his speeches like the major steps of his career, other political actors or orators[33] of the time, and Cicero's importance as a historical model.

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26 For the sake of convenience I will refer to the commenting voice in the *Scholia Bobiensia* as 'the Bobbio scholiast'.

27 Cf. Zetzel 2018, 258 for a brief characterization.

28 Cf. Farrell and Schwameis in this volume.

29 La Bua in this volume, p. 25.

30 Cf. Keeline in this volume, p. 66: Asconius might have written "for some imagined audience fashioned in [his] own image and likeness that probably does not really exist". Cf. also Kraus and Stray 2016, 11 on the "conceptualized" reader of commentaries.

31 In Asconius' case, the explicit internal readers of the text are his sons, but obviously they only stand *pars pro toto* for any reader with similar historical interests and needs, cf. Keeline in this volume, p. 49. The concept of the implied reader was coined by Iser 1972 (in analogy to the implied author imagined by Booth 1961, esp. 74–75).

32 Cf. the *calliditas*-debate mentioned by La Bua and Schwameis in this volume.

33 For an overview of this theme see Manuwald in this volume.

A somewhat related question is how much material Asconius' commentary and the *Scholia Bobiensia* originally included. It is obvious that both collections were once much longer than they are now, as we find cross-references to commentaries on speeches that are not transmitted in the manuscripts.[34] Asconius must have commented on substantially more than the five speeches we have—perhaps his work was meant to cover all Cicero's speeches.[35] As Keeline argues in this volume, he seems to have followed the chronology of Cicero's speeches when writing his commentaries (and in consequence probably also arranged the speeches chronologically), as his regular cross-references never refer to later speeches, but always to those that were delivered earlier in Cicero's career.[36]

As for the *Scholia Bobiensia*, of which we possess comments on twelve speeches, Hildebrandt has suggested that they once comprised notes on all known speeches of Cicero; recently, James Zetzel has tentatively followed him.[37] Giuseppe La Bua has reviewed the evidence and argued against this opinion, mostly due to the lack of positive evidence that would suggest a full commentary;[38] yet I would counter that we also do not have anything to prove the contrary. Instead, we do have at least one strong piece of evidence that confirms Hildebrandt's and Zetzel's claim. At the beginning of the commentary on *Cum senatui gratias egit* the scholiast defends his choice to exclude the speech *Si eum P. Clodius legibus interrogasset* because according to him it contains nothing that his readers will not find in other *post reditum* speeches, as well: *sed quoniam plurimae consequentur in quibus ⟨eadem⟩ paene omnia dicturus est, eximendam numero arbitratus sum quando rebus nihil depereat quae sine dubio in aliarum tractatione reddentur* ('but because many will follow in which he will say almost the same things, I thought that this one could be left out, because nothing will be lost with regard to things that doubtlessly will

34 Cf., e.g., Asconius' *diximus iam antea* when commenting on *In Pisonem* (Asc. *Pis.* 6.15C). See the overview of all internal references in Marshall 1985, 1–25. With regard to the *Scholia Bobiensia*, in the *Pro Flacco* alone we find cross-references to *Pro Murena* (96.5 and 104.8 St.); *In Catilinam* 2 (98.27–29 St.), *Pro Fonteio* (99.28 St.) and the *Divinatio in Caecilium* (108.2 St.).

35 Zetzel 2018, 143 believes it was a complete commentary. Lewis et al. 2006, xii carefully state that "some further *Commentaries on the Speeches of Cicero* have also perished". Bishop in this volume sees no reason why Asconius should not have commented on all speeches that were available to him.

36 Cf. Keeline in this volume.

37 Hildebrandt 1894, 10; Zetzel 2018, 143 ("seem … to have been").

38 Cf. La Bua 2019, 79–84.

be mentioned when treating other speeches', 108.18–21 St.).[39] This is at least the explicit reason; however, the scholiast also adds that the speech has not been transmitted as straightforwardly as the others (*quae oratio videtur post mortem eius inventa*, 'this speech seems to have been found after his death', 108.18 St.). One wonders whether its possible spuriousness might be another reason to exclude it.[40] This would be a hint that in principle the commentary was meant to cover all authentic speeches by Cicero in a (more or less) chronological order.[41]

The regular cross-references we find in both Asconius and the Bobbio scholiast also tell us something about how the implied authors expected their implied readers to use them: ideally, they should read the *whole* corpus with care. The alleged chronological order means that an implied reader would also go through the material chronologically; the cross-references would thereby regularly remind them of what they have read before. In this way they would receive a good impression not only of Cicero's rhetorical skills, but also of his political career and the historical circumstances in which he lived. The *argumenta* with their brief narrative of the historical and political circumstances of the speeches particularly build up towards a panorama of major events during Rome's political crisis of the first century BCE. Caroline Bishop has convincingly suggested with regard to Asconius that he "seeks to … recreate the vanished world of Republican politics".[42] In my view, the *Scholia Bobiensia* show a similar interest. And even if in the later collections of scholia that I will not consider in this chapter (Ps.-Asconius and the *Scholia Gronoviana*) the number and trustworthiness of historical facts gets lost or confused,[43] we can imagine that a student in an early medieval French monastery (for whose teachers the Leiden manuscript of the Gronovius scholia might have been copied)[44] could still learn more about Cicero, his contemporaries and the political situation in

39 Cf. La Bua 2001; a summary of the argument is in La Bua 2019, 81.

40 Similarly, in *Schol. Bob. Sest.* 126.3–5 St., the scholiast says that he leaves out some explanations since the reader can find them in the *Pro Milone* commentary. In *Schol. Bob. Planc.* 166.28–30 St., the scholiast mentions Cicero's sojourn in Rhodes and his studies with Molon, which might have been mentioned before; but it is also possible that such pieces of Cicero's biography which are mentioned out of their chronology invite the readers to complement their mental overview of Cicero's life.

41 Cf. Zetzel 2018, 143.

42 Bishop 2015, 293.

43 As Stangl 1884 has shown in detail and with a kind of arrogant pleasure for the Gronovius scholiasts B–D.

44 Cf. Zetzel 2018, 145–147 for a good overview of the philological complexities of the *Scholia Gronoviana*.

Rome (especially, as far as our excerpts show, about Sulla's and Caesar's dictatorships and some details of the Catilinarian affair) than other early medieval sources contained.[45]

4 Cicero's Political Curriculum: *cursus honorum* and Major Political Battles

I should specify a bit more what I mean by the assumption that our commentaries and scholia were an invitation to read Cicero's speeches as a kind of historical and biographical material. I do not want to suggest that they were proper biographies, which would imply that Cicero's *cursus honorum* would have been a conspicuous (perhaps even structuring) element. It is difficult to say exactly how the commentaries dealt with this matter as we lack all *orationes consulares* as well as the *Verrines*, which shortly predated Cicero's *aedilitas*. The first sentence of Asconius' *argumentum* to the *In toga candida* (*sex competitores in consulatus petitione Cicero habuit*, 'Cicero had six competitors in his bid for the consulship', Asc. *Tog*. 82.4C) suggests that Asconius did not find it relevant to introduce Cicero's decision to be a candidate with more emphasis. Generally, the impression is that the offices in both Asconius and the *Scholia Bobiensia* are only mentioned if they are directly relevant to the argumentation of the speeches, but not for their own sake. It is not surprising that references to Cicero's consulate as a major moment of his authority abound in the commentaries of the speeches of the 50s, as they confirm Cicero's own self-presentation as *homo consularis* during these years.[46] The other offices are only mentioned in passing.[47] Similarly, Cicero's *novitas* as one of the striking and contested features of his career is no very prominent theme in the remaining commentaries

45 For the loss of detailed knowledge about Cicero's life in Late Antiquity, cf. MacCormack 2013 (as in n. 25); on the medieval situation, cf. Schmidt 2000 and Cizek 2009.

46 Some striking passages in the *Scholia Bobiensia* are *Schol. Bob. Sul*. 79.19–24 St. (on the insinuation in the *Pro Sulla* that Cicero behaved like a *rex* during his consulship), which is countered by stressing that his magistracy was actually a *salutaris consulatus* (80.28–31 St.); *Schol. Bob. Flac*. 94.4–6 St. on the *invidia* which others showed towards his consulate; ibid. 107.23–31 St. where the scholiast stresses that Cicero's ethos is founded on his successful consulship; and *Schol. Bob. Vat*. 145.6–9 St., where Cicero's consulship is called honourable.

47 In Asconius, the *Pro Cornelio* and the events preceding it are dated with reference to Cicero's *praetura* (Asc. *Corn*. 59.5–16C and 60.9–10C). The Bobbio scholiast, in commenting on the famous passage about Cicero's quaestorship in the *Pro Plancio*, highlights Cicero's good behaviour in the province (163.27–30 St.).

and scholia[48]—but again, one must not forget that we do not have the speeches that would probably have offered more ample opportunity to mention it: the early speeches like the *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* or the consular speeches.

What we find slightly more often (although not abundantly) instead is the tendency to interpret Cicero's political engagement as a feud against personal enemies or opponents—sometimes all kinds of *invidiosi*,[49] but of course also the obvious big three, Catiline, Clodius, and (less visible as we lack commentaries on the *Philippics*) Mark Antony. Asconius and the Bobbio scholiast thereby confirm Cicero's own version of the recent history as expressed at the end of his life in *Phil.* 2.1: enemies of the Republic are enemies of Cicero. Such a concentration on personal enmities also shows the close connection of the scholia with what was going on in the schools of declamation, where Cicero's opposition to Catiline, Clodius, and especially Antony offered ample themes for *controversiae* and *suasoriae*.[50] I give one example that concerns Clodius. The speech *Pro Cornelio* seems to have given Asconius the opportunity to introduce Catiline for the first time (*fuit patricius* would be unnecessary had he been mentioned before). The context of the remark are disturbances during a trial of Manilius in 65 BCE, which Cicero ascribes to the instigation of unnamed *magni homines*. According to Asconius, these were Catiline and Piso—in fact his remark has regularly been taken as evidence for the alleged 'first' Catilinarian conspiracy:[51]

> L. Catilinam et Cn. Pisonem videtur significare. fuit autem Catilina patricius et eodem illo tempore erat reus repetundarum, cum provinciam Africam obtinuisset et consulatus candidatum se ostendisset. accusator erat eius **P. Clodius**, adulescens ipse quoque perditus, **qui postea cum Cicerone inimicitias gessit**. Cn. quoque Piso, adulescens potens et turbulentus, familiaris erat Catilinae omniumque consiliorum eius particeps et turbarum auctor.[52]

48 The most explicit treatment I could find is *Schol. Bob. Sul.* 80.12–24 St. (on *Sul.* 22), where the scholiast refers to Cicero's origins. On Cicero's "self-presentation as a *homo novus*" cf. Van der Blom 2019; on invective criticism of his *novitas* cf. Van der Blom 2014, 41.

49 E.g. Asc. *Mil.* 37.20C (*invidiosas* [*sc. contiones*] *de Cicerone*); *Schol. Bob. Flac.* 94.4–6 St.; *Red. pop.* 110.11 St. The term *invidia* is a standard characteristic of his opponents in Cicero's text from the 50s, cf. Achard 1981, 416.

50 See the overview in Kohl 1915, nos. 418–425.

51 Cf. Cic. *Corn.* 1, fr. 18 Crawford. Against the *communis opinio*, Woodman 2021 argues that the conspiracy of 66/65 BCE actually did take place; for a detailed treatment of Asconius' testimony, cf. ibid. 56–58.

52 Asc. *Corn.* 66.7–14C.

> He is apparently referring to L. Catilina and Cn. Piso. Catiline was a patrician and at that time under indictment for extortion, when he had governed Africa as his province and had declared his candidacy for the consulship. His accuser was **P. Clodius**, himself a depraved young **man who later became Cicero's enemy**. Also Piso, an influential and restless young man, was a friend of Catiline, an accomplice in all his plans and an author of turmoil.

It is worth noting that Asconius, albeit carefully (***videtur** significare*), identifies the men in question. Modern interpreters have doubted that Piso is meant here: an *adulescens* in Asconius' own words can hardly be called a *magnus homo*.[53] Lewis tries to defend the commentator by saying that it is unclear whether Asconius himself believed what he wrote, but was merely trying to follow Cicero's line of reasoning in this speech.[54] Perhaps, however, it is worthwhile to apply such a Ciceronian focus more broadly. Asconius takes the opportunity to introduce Cicero's major opponent Catiline in the year before Cicero's candidature for the consulship, and thereby focuses the reader's attention on the major development of what will follow soon. It is noteworthy that Catiline's name is not the only *prolepseis* of Cicero's personal opponents: Asconius also introduces Clodius as Catiline's prosecutor, adding the information that the same Clodius will become an important antagonist of Cicero in later years. Among the huge number of names and agents mentioned, both in the speeches themselves and in the explanations by Asconius, the readers can thus keep these figures in mind. Furthermore, in contrast to his immoral opponents, Cicero's light shines brighter. Suggesting clearly defined oppositions was Cicero's constant tactic throughout his life, and Asconius and the Bobbio scholiast fully subscribe to his self-representation.

5 Cicero's Exemplary Character

We can preliminarily conclude that the Cicero encountered by the implied reader in Asconius' commentary and the Bobbio scholiast is an extended version of an exemplary Cicero, in fact very close to the public *persona* he himself wanted to create. This has at least two consequences for the exegetes' working

53 Crawford 1994, 190–191 ad loc. (referring to Gruen 1974 and others who have questioned Asconius' interpretation).

54 Lewis et al. 2006, 272. An anonymous reviewer has suggested to me that Asconius uses *videtur* regularly when he is unsure about a piece of information he gives.

methods: they will mostly focus on Cicero's virtues, and they have to counter errors, shortcomings, or even vices in his speeches that might already have been branded as such by others.

Regularly we find characterizations that add up to the portrayal of an exemplary personality. Let me clarify what I mean with the help of the *argumentum* of Asconius' commentary on the *Pro Milone*. In the first sentences Asconius informs the readers that Milo and Cicero are the good ones. Both Clodius and Milo have gangs, and both show a high degree of boldness (*erant uterque audacia pares*, Asc. *Mil.* 30.16–17C). The difference is that Milo, together with his close friend Cicero (*Ciceronis … amicissimus*, 30.11–12C), represents the part of the *optimates*: *sed Milo pro melioribus partibus stabat* (30.17C). Yet, the adjective *melior* carries more associations than a simple reference to a political faction—it also embodies a moral statement about right and wrong. Milo and automatically Cicero as well stand on the good side of history; their political position is ethically preferable. Later, when Asconius mentions the *invidia* that Cicero encountered from the tribunes of the people, the majority of the *populus*, Plancus, and even Pompey, he contrasts this general hostility with Cicero's *constantia* and *fides*, which could not deter him from his duty.[55] A similar example is Asconius' first lemma to the *In toga candida*, where he explains that the envy felt by Caesar and Crassus (here not called *invidiosi*, but *refragatores*, 'people who oppose the interest of another', a hapax legomenon in pre-patristic Latin) is triggered by Cicero's virtue, in this case his increasing *civilis dignitas* (Asc. *Tog*. 83.20–21C). Obviously Asconius is much indebted to exemplary discourse: he thinks in virtue terms that he can ascribe to Cicero.

Turning to the *Scholia Bobiensia*, we can observe a comparable approach. A good example can be found in the commentary on the *Pro Sulla*, which contains Cicero's famous apology against the charges of the accuser L. Manlius Torquatus that he had behaved like a king during his consulate. In *Sul.* 21 Cicero stresses that as a consul he did not give any orders, but always obeyed the senate and *omnes boni*. The scholiast paraphrases Cicero's defence as follows: *itaque … statim … consulatum suum* ***talia edidisse moderationis et con-***

55 On the *invidia*-passage cf. above n. 49; the sentence stressing Cicero's firmness is rhetorically heroic, with multiple alliterations at its beginning and fourfold anaphor (Asc. *Mil.* 38.6–11C): *tanta tamen constantia ac fides fuit Ciceronis, ut non populi a se alienatione, non Cn. Pompei suspicionibus, non periculo futurum ut sibi dies ad populum diceretur, non armis, quae palam in Milonem sumpta erant deterreri potuerit a defensione eius* ('so great was his steadfastness and loyalty that he could not be deterred from Milo's defence either by abalienation from the people, or Pompey's suspicions, or the danger that in future he would be accused before the people, or by the weapons that had been openly taken up against Milo').

tinentiae et virtutis exempla *ut non ipse rex, sed aliis regnum adfectantibus esset inimicus* ('therefore … immediately [he affirms that] his consulship **produced such great examples of restraint, self-control, and virtue** that he was no king, but an enemy of others who aimed at kingship', 79.21–22 St.).[56] In the speech itself Cicero does not use the terms *moderatio* or *continentia* for his behaviour:[57] the use of the terms here shows the rhetorically trained mindset of the scholiast, who turns a typical moment of Ciceronian self-fashioning into exemplary discourse.[58] This corresponds to a more general tendency in the *Scholia Bobiensia*. By fully subscribing to Cicero's self-fashioning as a bringer of welfare and salvation to the state they depict his deeds as manifestations not of circumstantial and selective decision making but of his character. The reader is invited to accept Cicero's exemplary status and to read the rest of the speech (and also the following speeches) as the utterances of consistent political virtue.[59]

If we examine more closely which other virtues are ascribed to or associated with Cicero, it is not surprising to find those that Cicero himself considered important for his self-fashioning. There is his ability to bring about consensus among the Romans, which the scholiast in the *argumentum* of the *Post reditum ad Quirites* considers a greater glory than those celebrated in the previous triumphant speech in the senate: *nunc etiam populo audiente percenset, magis* (*ut opinor*) *gloriae suae consulens ut existimetur* ***omnium ordinum consensu restitutus*** *nec ulla populi* ⟨*pars*⟩ *ab sua dignitate dissenserit* ('now he continues his survey with the people as his audience, and thereby (as I believe) takes better care of his honour: the result is that one believes that he was

56 Cf. La Bua 2019, 262 on this passage in the context of the scholiast's interest in Cicero's "art of illusion".

57 *Virtus*, on the contrary, is once connected to his consulship, cf. *Sul.* 83: 'Can I be so out of my mind as to be guilty of allowing those things that I did for the salvation of all to seem to have been done by chance and luck rather than by virtue and careful planning (*virtute et consilio*)?' On *moderatio* as "la vertu par excellence" for Cicero cf. Achard 1981, 247.

58 I add in passing that Cicero would probably have applauded this reception, cf. Van der Blom 2010, 338 (my emphasis): "[H]e was aware that he needed more than that [*sc.* fame or his literary and oratorical achievements], hence his attempts to *set himself up as an exemplary governor and an exemplary and responsible consul* who was not afraid of acting resolutely."

59 To give just one example of a later speech: a comment on *Cum senatui gratias egit* (where Cicero describes that senators were forbidden by the consuls to wear mourning clothes out of sympathy for him, cf. *Red. sen.* 16) shows according to the scholiast that Cicero attacks Piso as a tyrant (*quasi tyrannum insectatur*), which seals his role as major defender of freedom (cf. *Schol. Bob. Red. sen.* 109.6–9 St.).

recalled **with the agreement of all orders**; and no ⟨part⟩ of the people had a different opinion about his dignity', 110.6–8 St.).[60] There is the *consultissimum temperamentum* ('extremely prudent moderation') with which he (again as the defender of Republican ideals) stirs envy against the triumvir Caesar without openly attacking him (130.16–19 St.). Moreover, there is his *constantia*, which Imperial authors so often questioned.[61] I have already suggested that Cicero's *persona* and his deeds appear as very consistent throughout the commentaries, as he is always associated with the same political virtues. A specific way to highlight this are the cross-references to passages in other speeches, which actively invite the reader to see the scholia as one coherent corpus. A telling example is found in one comment on the *Pro Milone*.[62] In *Mil.* 40 Cicero makes a very positive remark about Mark Antony (who was one of Milo's accusers) because he allegedly brought the highest hope of salvation to *omnes boni* when he had once almost killed Clodius himself. Thomas Keeline in his recent commentary interprets the passage as "extravagant praise", expressed in language that "is deliberately over the top".[63] The *Scholia Bobiensia*, however, are not interested in this aspect. Their major concern is the huge contrast between this passage and Cicero's negative portrayal of Mark Antony in the *Philippics*—obviously the scholiast was afraid that the readers could interpret the remark in the *Pro Milone* as a sign of Cicero's *inconstantia*. The scholiast reassures them that this is not true by pointing to a sentence in *Phil.* 2.21:

> sed de M. Antonio quod ait, et in Filippicis secunda oratione hoc idem contestatur his, ut opinor, verbis: "quidnam homines putarent si tum

60 Cf. La Bua 2019, 197 on this passage and Cicero's "self-aggrandizement".

61 On charges of unreliability during Cicero's own life cf. Van der Blom 2014, 46–48; for early Imperial examples, cf. Iulius Bassus (apud Sen. *Con.* 2.4.4): *nemo sine vitio est: in Catone deerat moderatio, in Cicerone constantia, in Sulla clementia* ('no one is without fault: Cato lacked moderation, Cicero consistency, Sulla clemency'); Ps.-Sal. *Cic.* 5: *homo levissimus*. See for such criticism in later Imperial authors now Jansen 2022, 244–250.

62 Because of the discrepancy between spoken and published speech, the *Pro Milone* might have triggered the question of Cicero's *constantia* in a special way. Asconius excuses his unusual lack of steadiness with a reference to the bad circumstances (*Cicero cum inciperet dicere, exceptus est acclamatione Clodianorum, qui se continere ne metu quidem circumstantium militum potuerunt. **itaque non ea qua solitus erat constantia dixit***, 'when Cicero began to speak, he was received by the outcry of Clodius' supporters, who could not restrain themselves even out of fear of the soldiers surrounding the trial; **therefore Cicero did not speak with the usual steadiness**', Asc. *Mil.* 41.24–42.2C).

63 Keeline 2021, 213–214.

> occisus esset, cum tu illum in foro inspectante populo R. gladio insecutus es negotiumque transegisses, nisi ille in scalas tabernae librariae se ⟨coniecisset⟩?"[64]
>
> But as to what he says with regard to Mark Antony: he makes the same point in the second *Philippic Speech* in these words, I believe: "What would the people think if he had been killed at that time when you chased him with a sword under the eyes of the Roman people and would have completed the job if he had not ⟨flung himself onto⟩ the staircase of a booksellers' shop?"

The cross-reference is more than a learned addition. Without mentioning any charge of inconsistency explicitly, the scholiast nevertheless seems to feel the need to react to one of the major criticisms against Cicero's public *persona* both during his life and in the Imperial reception. We see a similar approach in the scholia with regard to Cicero's exile; his unphilosophical behaviour during his absence from Rome had regularly been criticized, most notably by Greek authors like Plutarch and Cassius Dio.[65] This criticism was mostly based on what later authors could read in Cicero's letters, especially the third book of the *Ad Atticum* collection, whereas his *post reditum* speeches paint an image of a noble exile and triumphant return. The Bobbio scholiast completely corroborates this latter impression. When commenting on the *In Vatinium*, he remarks that Cicero regularly boasts of his *exilii gloriosam patientiam* ('glorious endurance of his exile', 144.20–21 St.) and thereby validates Cicero's behaviour by attributing a philosophical value term to it. This is in line with the general impression one gets from the *Scholia Bobiensia*: Cicero's exile was sad, but it brought him no dishonour, as the following passage emphatically expresses twice: *tristem magis profectionem quam ignominiosam illud exilium fuisse, ut non sit infame quod solam habuit iniuriam* ('this exile was a sad rather than a shameful departure, so that something which involved only a wrong is not discreditable', *Schol. Bob. Red. pop.* 110.21–23 St.).[66] Disgrace does not befit the image of Cicero that the scholiast depicts: despite the envy of his opponents, he has lived an exemplary life in the service of the state.

64 *Schol. Bob. Mil.* 123.3–7 St. The striking addition *ut opinor* (i.e., the intrusion of the commentator in the first person singular) can be read as a marker of the self-fashioning of the teacher as "intellectual guide", cf. La Bua in this volume, p. 23 and 28.

65 Cf. Plu. *Cic.* 32.5 and D.C. 38.18–30. On criticism of Cicero's exile, see Keeline 2018, 164–177, on the Philiscus-scene in Cassius Dio now also Jansen 2022, 250–255.

66 Cf. also *Schol. Bob. Sest.* 130.25–28 St. (admiration for Cicero's oratorical skills that turn exile from a punishment to a virtue); *Schol. Bob. Planc.* 156.26–29 St.

6 Apologies for Cicero's Shortcomings

With the last two quoted passages I have already touched upon the apologetical character of Asconius and the *Scholia Bobiensia*. So far, I have looked at instances in which the commenting voice backs up or enhances Cicero's own self-defensive strategies. But what about those rare cases in which the commentator or scholiast has to deal with shortcomings of Cicero? In Asconius' commentary, such instances always concern the orator's alleged factual errors or contradictions.[67] Why did he call Placentia a *municipium*, when it was a *colonia* (Asc. *Pis*. 4.8–14C)? Why did he misrepresent the length of an interval of time (ibid. 5.16–6.8C)? Why did he assert that no one had ever had his house rebuilt at public expense, when there had been other historical examples before him (ibid. 13.4–14.3C)? And why did Cicero offer two contradictory versions regarding a detail of Scipio the Elder's life in *Pro Cornelio* and *De haruspicum responso* (Asc. *Corn*. 69.24–70.25C)?[68] The defensive strategy[69] Asconius adopts is always the same: he refers to the difference between historiography and oratory. In the case of Cicero's house, the commentator simply states that Cicero is speaking not as a historian, but as an orator (*hoc Cicero oratorio modo, non historico, videtur posuisse*, 13.4C). In the case of the discrepancy in the Scipio story, Asconius refers to Cicero's *oratoria calliditas* that allows him to set aside truth and argue in a dialectic way (*non praeterire autem vos volo esse oratoriae calliditatis ut, cum opus est, eisdem rebus ab utraque parte vel a contrariis utantur*, 'I do not want you to fail to appreciate that it is a mark of oratorical shrewdness to use the same things in contrasting ways as pro and contra arguments when necessary', 70.13–15C).[70] The argument is not fully convincing, as historical facts should stand above an *in utramque partem* debate in the strict sense, but the point nevertheless helps Asconius to demonstrate

67 See Bishop 2015, 293–294 and Keeline in this volume, pp. 54–55 for Asconius' defence of Ciceronian shortcomings—Bishop even believes that whitewashing Cicero's name from the attacks of *obtrectatores* was "one of his [Asconius', CP] chief reasons for taking up the project in the first place" (294).

68 Still another category is represented by Asc. *Corn*. 77.1–5C, where different numbers of tribunes of the people after the Mons Sacer episode are discussed; Asconius seems to suggest that Cicero is wrong, but mitigates this as he shares this error with Tuditanus, Atticus, and Livy.

69 Cf. Schwameis in this volume, p. 222 who observes that Ps.-Asconius also "seems to stage himself as a defender of the orator", thus turning the commentary into a *leçon par l'exemple* of judicial rhetoric.

70 On Cicero's oratorical *calliditas* cf. La Bua in this volume, p. 35.

that historical *exempla* from the past can be used by the orator in a flexible way without damaging his ethos.[71]

So whereas the criticisms Asconius refutes mostly concern factual errors, his defence strategy is related to Cicero's personality. In the *Scholia Bobiensia*, this tendency becomes more evident. The (comparatively fewer) instances of dealing with direct criticism against Cicero are mostly concerned with his ethos and personal consistency. This becomes visible in in the *argumentum* of the *Pro Sestio* where the scholiast explains that Cicero spoke as the last of the advocates and that his speech therefore must be understood as the *peroratio* of the set of defence speeches for his client. This specific position in the trial explains why he also added elements that might seem *extra causam*, as critics have said. The scholiast admits that Cicero sometimes allows his emotions to lead him away from the main path, but assures the reader that this is not the case in this speech; instead Cicero has firmly stuck to what was useful for Sestius.[72] A second example concerns one specific sentence of the *Post reditum ad Quirites* (*a parentibus, id quod necesse erat, parvus sum procreatus, a vobis natus sum consularis*, 'from my parents I was born a tiny baby, as was necessary; from you I was born as an ex-consul', *Red. pop*. 5), which is characterized as not dignified enough (*popularis magis quam pressa et gravis*, *Schol. Bob. Red. pop*. 111.11 St.), but the 'error' with regard to Cicero's use of rhetorical *ethos* is immediately justified by the remark that Cicero was indeed addressing the common folk (*ad aures vulgi*, 111.12 St.) and therefore had to adapt his rhetoric to the audience.

Two further instances of criticism directed against Cicero's personality concern a crucial element of anti-Ciceronian topoi in Antiquity: his exuberant self-praise.[73] In these cases alone we observe the scholiast agreeing with Cicero's

71 For the interest of Ciceronian scholia in *dissimulatio* techniques see La Bua 2019, 219–266 and La Bua, Farrell, and Schwameis in this volume.

72 *Schol. Bob. Sest*. 125.26–31 St.: *itaque Tullius ea peroravit quae sibi fuerant explicanda nec, ut plerique arbitrati sunt, extra causam vagatus est. quamvis enim sciamus … multa Ciceronem vel iratum vel dolentem de passionibus suis ultra paene quam res posceret exaggerare solitum, tamen quod hic prolixa quadam turbulentissimi temporis descriptione multum voluminis occupat, non mediocriter videtur ad praesens negotium pertinere.* ('Therefore Cicero in a kind of peroration of the trial explained what had to be explained by him and did not speak about things that did not belong to the case, as many have thought. Although we know … that Cicero, when he is angry or sad, usually piles up many things on account of his emotions—almost more than the case requires—nevertheless the fact that in this case he fills lots of his book with an extensive description of the very turbulent time seems to be well connected to the actual business.'). Cf. on this passage La Bua 2019, 196.

73 Suffice it to think of Seneca's *De brevitate vitae* = *Dial*. 10.5.1 (*illum consulatum non sine causa sed sine fine laudatum*). Cf. Dugan 2014 for a psychoanalytical approach and La Bua 2019, 197–198 for an overview of the theme in the scholia. Another point of criticism

critics. In the *In Vatinium* the scholiast comments on Cicero's remark that out of grief for his exile the forum was sad, the senate silent and all intellectual life came to a standstill (*Vat*. 8). According to the scholiast this is one of several examples (*haec et talia*) of Ciceronian arrogance (*superbia*). Although his excellent eloquence deserves every praise, it would have been better not to express it so explicitly: *haec et talia possis aput M. Tullium quasi nimium superbe dicta reprehendere. quamvis mereatur hoc testimonium tam insignis et nobilis eloquentia, multo rectius fuit moderari huic de semet ipso praedicationi* ('One can criticize this and other similar passages in Cicero as spoken with too much arrogance. Although his extraordinary and noble eloquence deserves such appraisal, it would have been much more correct to tone down this statement about himself', *Schol. Bob. Vat*. 144.24–26 St.). The criticism is even more relevant, so the lemma continues, as Cicero does not obey his own precepts, as 'elsewhere' he has stated that too much arrogant ostentation is offensive (*odiosa sit superbia et iactantia*, 144.26–145.1 St., which Stangl connects to Cic. *Div. Caec*. 36). The same excessive boastfulness, now with regard to his consulate, is mentioned in a comment on *Planc*. 85.[74] The scholiast remarks that in his letter to Pompey, Cicero had praised his own deeds with too much arrogance so that Pompey became angry with him[75]—an error for which Cicero eventually paid a bitter price in that Pompey did not support him in the months preceding his exile:

> nam significat, ⟨quantum⟩ scio, epistulam non mediocrem ad instar voluminis scribtam quam Pompeio in Asiam de rebus suis in consulatu gestis miserat Cicero, aliquanto, ut videbatur, insolentius scribtam, ut Pompei stomachum non mediocriter commoveret, quod quadam **superbiore iactantia** omnibus se gloriosis ducibus anteponeret. … obfuerunt autem re vera: nam sic effectum est ut ei Pompeius contra Clodianam vim non patrocinaretur.[76]

(which I only mention in passing) concerns Cicero's poetry which is considered not adequate to his dignity (*Schol. Bob. Planc*. 165.5–9 St.).

74 That the theme was very much in the focus of the scholiast, can also be seen in yet another passage from *De aere alieno Milonis*, where the scholiast hints at Cicero speaking boastfully of himself (ἀλαζονικὰ *erant*) in the generalizing third person (*non specialiter nec nominatim, sed per hanc generalitatem*) in order not to be perceived as over-ostentatious (*ne pro insolenti et iactatissimo haberetur*, 171.25–29 St.).

75 See Cicero's letter to Pompey's in which he shows himself disappointed because Pompey has not sent official compliments: *Fam*. 5.7 with Rawson 1978, 95–97.

76 *Schol Bob. Planc*. 167.22–30 St.

> For ⟨as far as⟩ I know, he refers to a rather long letter, almost resembling a book, which Cicero sent to Pompey in Asia about his actions during the consulship—written a bit too arrogantly, as it seems, so that Pompey got quite angry because Cicero **with arrogant ostentation** placed himself above all illustrious military leaders. … These words really harmed him, for as a result Pompey did not protect him against the aggression of Clodius.

One might ask why both Asconius and the Bobbio scholiast, who are obviously interested in presenting an idealized version of Cicero to their readers, deal with Cicero's factual errors or mention criticism of his behaviour at all. An important reason for this is the commentator's *auctoritas*, which depends on his competence and trustworthiness.[77] Simply excluding all kinds of possible criticism was therefore not an option, as this would have destroyed the readers' faith in the commenting author—the readers knew the less favourable tradition about Cicero anyway. So instead of concealing it the commentators contain the existing criticism by including it in homeopathic doses and either refuting or embedding it firmly in their positive account of Cicero's life. It is of course dangerous to argue *ex silentio*, but it is striking that Asconius' commentaries never hint at Cicero's improper boastfulness (which, as Seneca's famous dictum attests, was definitely a prominent theme in Asconius' day), whereas the *Scholia Bobiensia* do so thrice. This could simply have to do with the fragmented transmission. I nevertheless tentatively propose an alternative explanation: the fact that the Bobbio scholiast does not pass over the issue in silence, but dares to include this piece of criticism, might hint at the less contested status of Cicero as historical *exemplum* in the later second century compared to the Neronian times in which Asconius was active (as a contemporary of Seneca and Lucan, who both shed a rather ambiguous light on Cicero's personality).[78] We know from late antique handbooks like Ampelius' *Liber memorialis*, which includes Cicero among those who committed great deeds in times of peace, or Ps.-Aurelius Victor's *De viris illustribus*, which offers a very positive biography of Cicero, that Cicero had by then become an integral part of Rome's *viri illustres*—also as a political and ethical *exemplum*.[79] A further important voice in the consolidation of Cicero's ethical value was Quintilian, who defined the

77 Cf. Farrell in this volume on self-fashioning strategies of the ancient commentators.

78 On Cicero in Lucan, see Narducci 2003 and recently La Bua 2020 and Jansen 2022, 151–159; on Seneca's view on him, Grimal 1984 and Keeline 2018, 196–222.

79 For a concise overview of the Ciceronian tradition in late antique abbreviators see Gasti 2018.

true orator with Cato the Elder's famous claim as a *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (*Inst*. 12.1.1) and turned Cicero into the exemplary figure for this rhetorical and ethical ideal.[80] When the scholiast does not pass over a few critical aspects in silence, this might be as much a sign of his accuracy as of his belief in Cicero's consolidated exemplary status: mild criticism cannot damage this positive image of the orator and politician.

7 Concluding Remarks: Implied vs. Actual Readers and Changes of Use

We have seen that both Asconius and the *Scholia Bobiensia* present Cicero as an exemplary figure from Rome's Republican past. Especially for the implied reader who would not consult the comments on one speech only, but would follow up all cross-references and read the corpora as coherent texts, this becomes obvious: Cicero's biography, insofar as it reveals itself through the speeches, is turned into a consistent and exemplary life in service of the Roman state.[81] The exemplary discourse seems to be even more prominent in the Bobbio scholiast than in Asconius, at least if we consider explicit references to or criticism of moral categories as a hint in that direction. The most practical way of turning a historical person into an exemplary one is by making her/him not only possess, but also represent general values or a political system. Thus when the *Scholia Bobiensia* in the *In Clodium et Curionem* declare that Cicero's *gloria* derived from the fact 'that he cannot be divided from the state' (*gloriae Ciceronis accedit quod seiungi ab re publica non potest*, 86.19 St.),[82] this sentence could be called the quintessence of Cicero's exemplarity.

The diachronic element of both sets of commentaries, which have been developed over centuries, however, also raises huge problems that have not

80 Cf. the defence of Cicero's ethos in *Inst*. 12.1.14–20 with Connolly 2007, 256–258 and Stoner 2022, 98.

81 The question of whether for such a consistent character portrayal the commentaries and scholia were partly relying on the technique of *ethopoiia* in commentaries on poetic texts, is beyond the scope of this paper. They had at least learned this kind of approach to persons in literary texts in their own education. Cf. e.g. Jakobi 1996 on Donatus' commentary of Terence, who shows that it was Donatus' aim "die Einheitlichkeit innerhalb der Charakterzeichnung aufzuweisen" (165); this was according to Jakobi even the core of his exegesis (177).

82 In the *Scholia Gronoviana* we find a similar expression of an indissoluble link of Cicero and a concept, namely peace (*Schol. Gron. Marc*. 295.8–9 St.: *nec enim locus esse poterat inter bella Ciceroni*).

been solved so far.[83] It is hard to identify the reasons why the commentary by Asconius and the Bobbio scholiast suffered disarrangement in their manuscript tradition. In the case of the Bobbio corpus, we can be pretty sure that this happened before the end of fourth century CE. Perhaps one can connect the development to the increasing importance of the exemplary model of historical commemoration, in which absolute chronology was not the only, and not automatically the preferred, method of arranging historical material. Another one could be a thematic (as in Ampelius) or simply an order at random (as in Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*). In addition, the accessibility of the speeches could have played a role: did one want to start with easier texts? Ultimately, the order in which the speeches are transmitted does not easily relate to any one principle. We simply have to accept that real users often do not behave like the implied reader whom a text constructs. At a certain moment the actual readers of the commentaries seem to have lost interest in historiographical chronology when reading Cicero's speeches. Yet, even in their mutilated and reversed form as they appear today, Asconius and the *Scholia Bobiensia* contain enough elements of exemplary discourse to be a relevant piece of evidence for the afterlife of Cicero as a political *persona* in Late Antiquity.[84]

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83 Cf. on the problem of chronology Zetzel 2018, 144, who remarks that in the case of Asconius, the textual tradition reaches out until his rediscovery in the Renaissance, whereas for the *Scholia Bobiensia* he concludes that "[t]he collection of the Bobbio scholia is likely to remain opaque".

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